ROYAL CANADIAN MARINE SEARCH & RESCUE

Saving Lives on the Water

48°21'47"N 123°40'00"W • HEADQUARTERS, EAST SOOKE

PERFORMANCE REPORT

2026





WE'RE THE CHARITY THAT SAVES LIVES ON THE WATER.

Every rescue is a human story. Of someone in trouble on the water, and someone willing to help. RCMSAR volunteers leave their families, their work, and their routines to answer the call, knowing that every mission could save a life. This report reflects the heart of RCMSAR: people helping people, on the water and in the communities we serve.

THAT IS WHY WE EXIST.

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND CEO

Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue has completed another successful year. We met all our operational objectives while responding to more than 500 search and rescue missions in the challenging coastal waters of British Columbia. Each mission reflects our ongoing commitment to being ready when people on the water need help.

We continued to support the Canadian Coast Guard by observing and reporting potential marine environmental hazards. Beyond our traditional marine search and rescue role, the number of missions supporting the Province of BC and other emergency response agencies continued to grow, reflecting the increasingly diverse ways RCMSAR volunteers are called upon to serve their communities.

In the last year alone, our volunteers put in over 72,000 hours of their own time to train, prepare for, and execute search and rescue missions. They are highly active in the communities where they are located and support many marine-based activities such as regattas and paddling events.

RCMSAR is guided by a robust strategic plan that leads us into the future, and we have made considerable progress on many initiatives that directly support the strategic plan. The plan's primary focus is our volunteers, ensuring they have the resources and training needed to conduct their missions safely. This has led to the introduction of a more volunteer-centric training program, allowing for a better balance of our members' life priorities. We have also completed a volunteer recruiting and retention project that will support our objectives going forward.

Next year's objectives will build on that progress. We will continue to revise our training program to ensure our crews are well trained. Financial sustainability will remain a priority, as it is critical to ensure the required resources are available in the coming years. We will be investigating new initiatives in vessel design to include environmental stewardship. Increasing the public's awareness of our volunteers' exceptional contributions will be another focal point for the coming year.

RCMSAR would not be able to execute our mission of "Saving Lives on the Water" without the tremendous support of our partners, donors, and the fantastic support our stations and societies receive from their communities.

Together, we are "saving lives on the water."



Michael Ervin
BOARD CHAIR



Bill Riggs
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2028

Three focus areas, plotted as one course — each waypoint carrying the priorities that move us toward a single destination.

01
AWARENESS
- BRANDING & MARKETING
- RELATIONSHIPS

02
SUSTAINABILITY
- FINANCIAL
- ENVIRONMENTAL

03
ONE CREW CULTURE
- TRAINING
- EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

VISION

To be the recognized leader in community-based marine search and rescue in British Columbia.

HOW WE MEASURE THE COURSE

Annual progress against each focus area is reviewed by the board and reported to volunteers, partners and funders.

THE CONSTANT BASELINE | SAFETY • TRUST • TEAMWORK

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Ervin, Board Chair
Chris Badger, Vice Chair
Cindy Dopson, Secretary
Cyrus Ameli
Linda Blake
Bruce Hayne
Peter Kvarnstrom
Catherine Lau
Jane London
Rona Tepper
Hans Verbeek

MORE THAN A NUMBER

A mission might begin with a pager sounding during dinner. A training session is time a volunteer has chosen to spend preparing for a call they hope never comes. And every person assisted is someone whose day on the water did not go as planned. The numbers on this page help tell the story of the past year. But at their heart are people: those who needed help, and the volunteers who were ready to help them.

29*

RESCUE STATIONS

Twenty-nine communities, each supported by local volunteers who are your neighbours, co-workers, family members, or friends who have chosen to be there when someone on the water needs them. From busy urban harbours to small coastal communities, they train together, respond together, and know the waters they call home.

*Plus a Boating Safety Station in Vancouver

950+

VOLUNTEERS

More than 950 people give their time to marine search and rescue, fitting their volunteer roles around families, jobs, and everyday life. Most volunteer as fast rescue craft crew members; others contribute behind the scenes, helping their stations run, raise funds, and stay ready. All play a critical role in the rescue team.

591

MISSIONS CONDUCTED

Five hundred and ninety-one times last year, someone on the water needed help and volunteers responded. Some calls were resolved quickly; others stretched for hours. Each began the same way: with a call for help, and volunteers ready to drop everything to help them.

539

PEOPLE BROUGHT HOME TO SAFETY

Like the 58 passengers onboard the sightseeing vessel that struck a rock in English Bay (see page 12 for the story).

9,353

HOURS INVESTED IN CREW TRAINING

Every hour spent in training is mission critical and increases the capabilities fo our crews. A skill practiced during training, such as how to effectively use sensors can be instrumental, as occurred during one nighttime search when a crew used a thermal imaging camera to locate a person in the water (see story on page 13).

59

PEOPLE WHO ARE ALIVE BECAUSE RCMSAR VOLUNTEERS WERE THERE

Like Chris, Tess, and their 10 year-old dog. After their canoe capsized, they spent nearly four hours in the water before volunteers were able to find them (see page 14 for the full story).



80%

PERCENT OF CALLS COME FROM PEOPLE IN DISTRESS OR DANGER

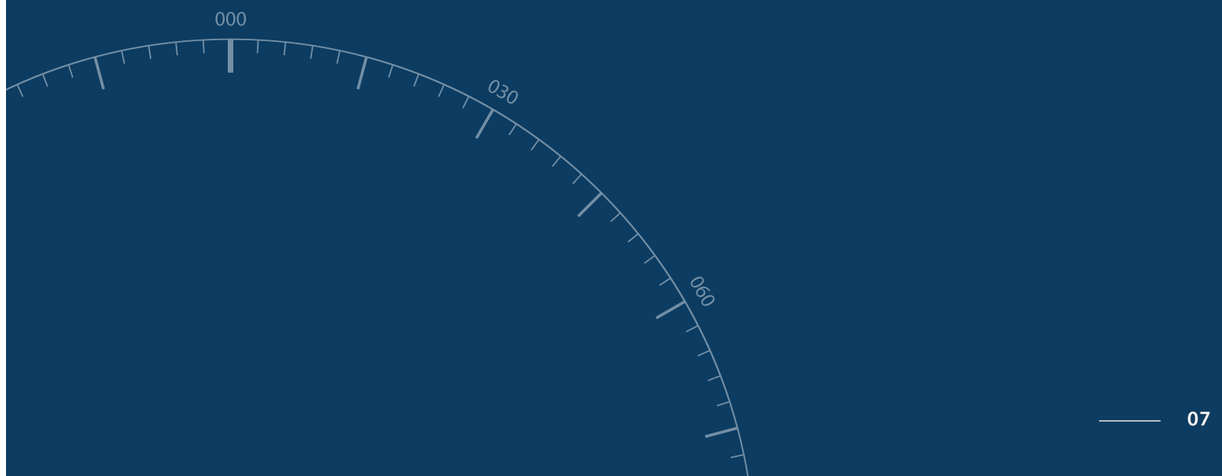
Behind each of these calls was someone whose time on the water had gone wrong. In that moment, they weren't a statistic. They were someone waiting for help and hoping someone would come.

44

VESSELS

When volunteers go out on the water in rough weather, darkness, or challenging conditions, they need to trust the vessel beneath them. Our purpose-built rescue boats are designed to handle demanding conditions, giving crews the stability, control, and reliability they need to reach people safely — and bring them home.

EACH HOUR THEY GAVE WAS DRIVEN BY THE SAME GOAL: SAVING LIVES ON THE WATER



OUR VOLUNTEERS

THE HEART OF RCMSAR

It takes a diverse group of people to keep RCMSAR rescue stations 'mission ready.' Our volunteers span generations, bring different skills and life experiences, and come from differing backgrounds — from new members learning the ropes to experienced crew and leaders, and those who support their stations behind the scenes.

What they share is a willingness to dedicate their time, learn new skills and be there when their crews and communities need them. Together, they are the people who make RCMSAR work. Behind each of them are families, employers, communities, and people like you whose support helps makes that commitment possible.

964
VOLUNTEERS

72,972
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS

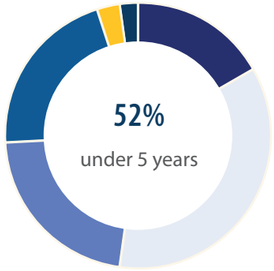
156
NEW VOLUNTEERS

GENDER



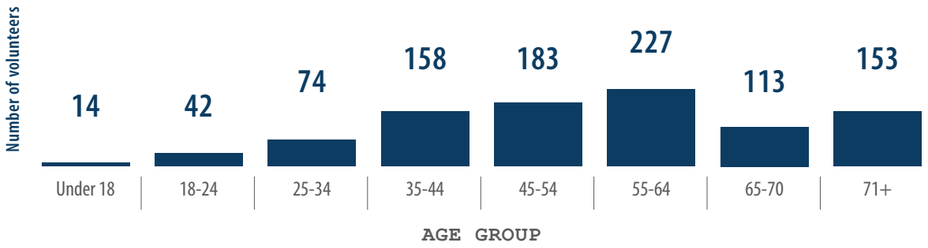
Man	73%
Woman	24%
Non-Binary	2%
Prefer not to say	1%

YEARS OF SERVICE



More than 30 years	2%
21 to 30 years	3%
10 to 20 years	21%
5 to 9 years	22%
1 to 4 years	36%
Less than 1 year	17%

AGE RANGE



A NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS, READY TO HELP



326 MISSIONS
170 BROUGHT HOME TO SAFETY
24 MAY BE ALIVE BECAUSE WE WERE THERE
14 STATIONS
461 VOLUNTEERS
18 VESSELS

WHEN A SEARCH DOESN'T END IN A RESCUE

STATION 29 • LADYSMITH

On a cold morning last December, volunteers from Station 29 Ladysmith were paged to help search for a vulnerable missing person who was known to spend time near the shoreline between Ladysmith and Chemainus.

With no precise location to head for, the crew had to build a search plan from the information they had: where the woman lived, where she had last been seen, places she was known to visit, the weather, and how conditions could affect drift on the water.

Using that information, the crew searched methodically along the shoreline in the harbour, scanning the beaches, rocks, and water for her. They continued farther along the coast before searching the shoreline again on the return trip to Ladysmith.

The seven volunteers on board spent nearly five hours on the water, rotating through various crew positions to ensure they remained alert and focused during the extended search.

When the search was called off, they returned to Ladysmith only to learn later that she had been found deceased. It was a difficult end to a search that had begun with the hope of finding her safe.



22 MISSIONS
38 BROUGHT HOME TO SAFETY
13 MAY BE ALIVE BECAUSE WE WERE THERE
5 STATIONS
80 VOLUNTEERS
9 VESSELS

35 NAUTICAL MILES FROM HOME

STATION 63 • KITIMAT

One April morning, just before 9 a.m., our Kitimat station was paged to assist two people who were stranded in Kitkiata Inlet, about 60 kilometers southwest of Kitimat, after their boat's motor had failed.

Radio communications were poor and broken, so there wasn't much information to go on. The initial report described a seven-foot vessel. What the crew found, two hours later, were two men in a 17-foot boat who had been anchored there since the previous day, when their motor failed.

When RCMSAR volunteers reached them, they first checked on the two men and assessed their vessel. Despite their long wait, both were in good spirits and had no injuries.

Getting to them, though, was only the first half of the mission.

The disabled boat was still 35 nautical miles from the marina, so the crew rigged a tow and began the long trip back. For over five hours, the two vessels made their way home together.

By the time the volunteers got back to their rescue base, it was 5 p.m. They still had the usual work to do; cleaning up, resetting the boat, and talking through the day's mission.

At 5:30, more than eight hours after the pager first sounded, they finally headed home themselves.

No dramatic rescue. Just a very long tow, but the kind of call that matters just as much when you're the one stranded.



243	331	22	11	420	16
MISSIONS	BROUGHT HOME TO SAFETY	MAY BE ALIVE BECAUSE WE WERE THERE	STATIONS	VOLUNTEERS	VESSELS

JRCC OUTSTANDING OPERATION • 1 OF 3

AN UNEXPECTED END TO A SIGHTSEEING TOUR

STATION 2 • NORTH VANCOUVER

A morning sightseeing trip through Vancouver Harbour in August 2025 changed in an instant when the Harbour Princess, carrying 58 passengers, struck a submerged rock near Point Atkinson.

Passengers described hearing a loud thud as the vessel came to an abrupt stop. Glassware shattered, some people were knocked off their feet and at least two passengers were injured. One passenger later recalled the sound of breaking glass and a baby crying as people tried to understand what had happened.

The initial call reported that the vessel had lost power and was drifting toward the rocks, prompting a multi-agency response. RCMSAR Station 2 North Vancouver was first to arrive and helped prevent the vessel from moving farther into danger. Passengers remained on board while crews assessed the situation and worked to safely free the vessel.

Although the vessel was not taking on water, passengers later told news reporters that the experience had been frightening. They were directed to the lower deck and told to put on their life jackets while rescue crews worked around them.

Once freed, the vessel was escorted back to Coal Harbour with assistance from Canadian Coast Guard crews. One passenger was transported to hospital in stable condition.

For 58 people, an ordinary morning on the water had suddenly become potentially dangerous. The efforts of multiple marine rescue crews working together brought them home safely.



JRCC OUTSTANDING OPERATION • 2 OF 3

FOUND IN THE DARK

STATION 1 • WEST VANCOUVER

One night last January, just before 9 p.m., RCMSAR volunteers from Station 1 West Vancouver were called to search for someone who had jumped from Vancouver's Llons Gate Bridge.

JUST BEFORE 9 P.M.
Paged to search the shoreline

ABOUT 10 MINUTES IN
A face and hands on the infrared camera

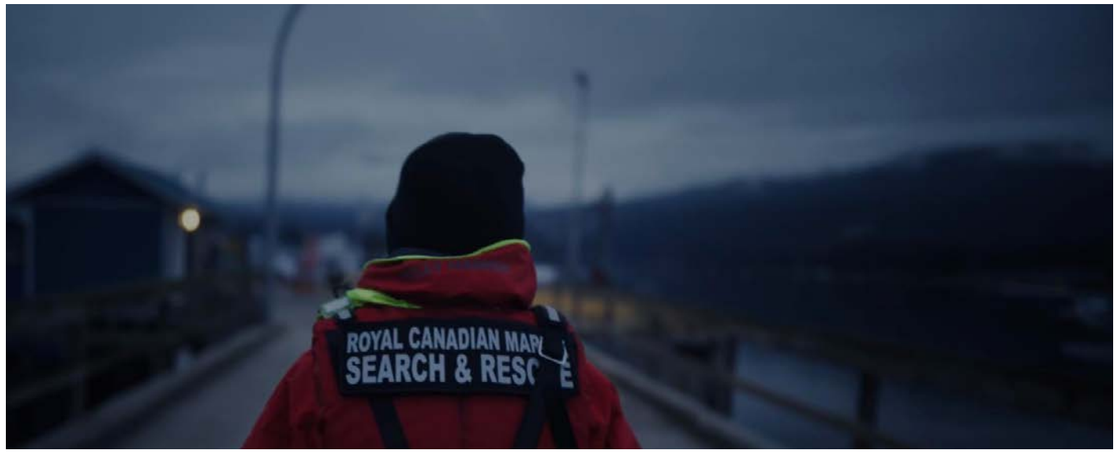
AT THE DOCK
Paramedics waiting

The moon was full, the sky cloudless, and visibility was as clear as daytime. But they had no description of the person or what they were wearing. Three volunteers watched the dark water from the back deck while the coxswain scanned with the vessel's infrared camera. About 10 minutes into the search, something appeared on the screen, and as they moved closer, they realized they were looking at the man's face and hands in the water.

Miraculously, he was alive, but clearly in distress.

The volunteers pulled him from the water, brought him into the cabin, and cared for him as they headed to a nearby dock, where paramedics were waiting.

That night, technology helped find him but training and teamwork ensured he was brought safely back to shore.



That night, technology helped find him.
Training and teamwork helped bring him safely to shore.

THREE+ HOURS IN THE WATER

STATION 12 • HALFMOON BAY

For more than three hours after their canoe capsized, Chris, Tess and their 10-year-old dog, Tesla, waited for rescue in the cold water near Salmon Inlet on the Sunshine Coast.

They had been canoeing that September afternoon when wind pushing against a strong tide created rough seas that began lifting and slamming their canoe. Before they could react, it capsized. Despite repeated attempts, Chris and Tess could not right the canoe. Thankfully, all three were wearing lifejackets.

Tess held onto Chris and Tesla while trying to keep their emergency beacon above the water and repeatedly calling for help. As the hours passed, Chris became increasingly affected by the cold, eventually becoming barely responsive and unable to speak.

Their personal locator beacon had alerted the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre, and volunteers from RCMSAR Station 12 Halfmoon Bay were tasked to find them. With poor radio and cell reception and fading daylight, they followed updated beacon positions, checked campsites, and spoke with people along the shoreline.

Then, as darkness was setting in, one of the volunteers heard a faint cry for help. The engines were shut down so everyone could listen. The call came again.

Just before 8 p.m., the volunteers located them. Chris was brought aboard first and treated for advanced hypothermia, followed by Tess and their dog. Within minutes, they were on their way back to shore, where paramedics were waiting.

For Chris and Tess, what began as an afternoon on the water became an experience they will never forget, and a reminder that when something goes wrong, the right safety equipment can help rescuers find you, and trained volunteers can help bring you safely home.

All three recovered, and in the months since, Chris and Tess have kept in touch with their rescuers.



> WE WILL NEVER, EVER BE ABLE TO PROPERLY CONVEY THE RELIEF AND GRATITUDE WE'VE FELT FOR YOU ALL IN THOSE MOEMENTS, AN DIN THE DAYS SINCE.
>
> CHRIS AND TESS

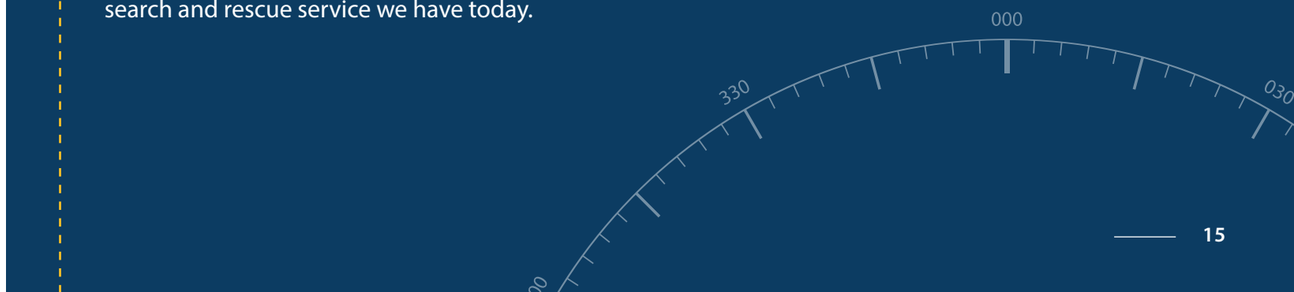


A SHARED HONOUR

In 2025, RCMSAR received the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Maritime Achievement in the organization category. This award reflects not only the impact that RCMSAR crews have had on the water, but also the amazing dedication and professionalism of our volunteers.

RCMSAR has been built over decades by volunteers, with each generation passing on its knowledge and experience to the next. Year after year, that commitment has shaped the marine search and rescue service we have today.

RCMSAR CEO Bill Riggs, Board Chair Michael Ervin and Oak Bay volunteer Jenny Weston (pictured above) accepted the award on behalf of the organization. They represented hundreds of volunteers across British Columbia who keep showing up — for training nights, weekly vessel inspections, community events, and calls that can come at any hour.



RECOGNIZING OUR VOLUNTEERS

Each year, RCMSAR recognizes the volunteers whose commitment, service and actions stand out. From volunteer awards and long service medals to recognition for exceptional missions, these honours reflect the dedication, teamwork, and skill our members bring to their stations, their communities and the people who depend on them.

CCGA ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE MEDAL

Noah Argao, Station **10** Richmond
Dave Witt, Station **106** Shuswap

CCGA EXEMPLARY SERVICE MEDAL

Cliff Doherty, Station **106** Shuswap (Posthumously)

CCGA LEADERSHIP MEDAL

Joshua Lepin, Station **1** West Vancouver
Michel Morin, Station **27** Nanaimo
Rob Waldie, Station **106** Shuswap

CCGA LONG SERVICE MEDAL

45 Years of Service

Dave Lindley, Station **36** Sidney

35 Years of Service

Shawn Burchett, Station **2** North Vancouver
Duncan Peacock, Station **63** Kitimat

25 Years of Service

Daniel Wright, Station **2** North Vancouver

20 Years of Service

Nello Angerilli, Station **103** Vancouver
John Blair, Station **103** Vancouver
Harold Gordon, Station **2** North Vancouver
Diane Hopkinson, Station **103** Vancouver
Benjamin Jones, Station **5** Crescent Beach
Leslie Landes, Station **103** Vancouver
Tom McKeachie, Station **25** Salt Spring Island
Christopher Peacock, Station **63** Kitimat
Bob Poulton, Station **103** Vancouver
Elin Price, Station **45** Masset
Gordie Robinson, Station **34** Cowichan

JOINT RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRE OUTSTANDING OPERATIONS

Station 12 Halfmoon Bay
The Search for the Overturned Red Canoe

Station 2 North Vancouver
MV Harbour Princess Aground

Station 1 West Vancouver
Confirmed Jumper off Lions Gate Bridge

RCMSAR CEO COMMENDATION

Doug Collett, Station **29** Ladysmith
Jeff Gowland, Station **37** Sooke
Henrik Jacobsen, Station **31** Brentwood Bay
Brian Pritchard, Station **31** Brentwood Bay
Sean Sweeney, Station **4** Squamish
Doug Wasylenki, Station **106** Shuswap

BOARD OF DIRECTORS LIFE MEMBER

Cliff Doherty, Station **106** Shuswap (Posthumously)

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Gordie Robinson, Station **34** Cowichan Bay
Rebecca Humphrey, Station **25** Salt Spring Island
Norlan Cabot, Station **1** West Vancouver

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



GORDIE ROBINSON

SUPPORTING MEMBER • STATION 34 COWICHAN BAY • SINCE 2006

This award recognizes an individual whose service has made an outstanding difference to their station or to RCMSAR. Since joining the Coast Guard Auxiliary in 2006, Gordie Robinson has contributed to almost every part of the organization—from operations and training to leadership, fundraising, and station development.

Gordie played a significant role in the transition from the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary to RCMSAR and later served on the RCMSAR executive board.

He helped establish the headquarters and Training Centre in Sooke and, after moving to Nanaimo, worked with local governments, boating organizations and others to help create a rescue base and training centre there.

Gordie has served as a coxswain and jet boat instructor, training volunteers at his own station and across RCMSAR. He's held senior station and society leadership roles and continues to serve on the Station 34 Cowichan Society board.

Over 20 years, he has participated in 181 missions, 290 training exercises and 169 classroom sessions, contributing more than 2,837 recorded volunteer hours.

And "recorded" is an important word. Those numbers capture only part of the time Gordie has given—and only part of what his contribution has meant to RCMSAR.

NEW VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



REBECCA HUMPHREY

REGISTERED NURSE • STATION 25 SALT SPRING ISLAND • FIRST YEAR

This award recognizes an RCMSAR volunteer with less than three years of service who has shown exceptional dedication, growth and service to their station and community. In just her first year at Station 25 Salt Spring, Rebecca Humphrey has done exactly that.

Within months of joining, Rebecca became an engaged and dependable member of the crew, committing herself to training, station activities and building the skills needed to respond on the water. She has taken part in taskings ranging from a nighttime rescue to a lengthy search and towing operation.

Rebecca has also brought something particularly valuable to the station: her experience as a Registered Nurse. She contributes to first-aid training and helps other crew members apply emergency medical knowledge to the realities of marine search and rescue. Her involvement in both on-the-water exercises and station training has helped strengthen the crew's skills and confidence.

Shortly after joining, Rebecca also stepped into the role of secretary for the Gulf Islands Marine Rescue Society, supporting the station behind the scenes as well as on the water.

In only her first year, Rebecca has shown a willingness to step forward wherever she can. Fellow volunteers describe her as gracious, capable, and kind, and a team player who freely shares her time, skills, and knowledge.

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



NORLAN CABOT

SUPPORTING MEMBER LEAD • STATION 1 WEST VANCOUVER • SINCE 2023

This award recognizes an RCMSAR volunteer who, while not serving as operational crew, has made a significant and sustained contribution through a supporting role. Since joining Station 1 West Vancouver in 2023, Norlan Cabot has shown just how much supporting members can contribute.

Soon after joining, Norlan quickly became a major part of station life and was asked to lead the station's group of supporting members. She keeps them connected, finds meaningful ways for them to participate and coordinates their involvement in community events and station activities. In doing so, she has helped create a group whose members feel valued, involved and part of the station.

Norlan is also a familiar face at community events, fundraisers, and public safety activities. She has helped strengthen relationships with community partners and supporters while raising awareness of RCMSAR.

She regularly takes part in station and management meetings, bringing ideas and connections related to fundraising and community engagement — and often coffee or homemade baking for everyone.

Norlan's contribution shows why supporting members are critical. By taking on work behind the scenes and helping create a welcoming station community, she gives operational volunteers more time to focus on training and responding when someone on the water needs them.

CCGA EXEMPLARY SERVICE MEDAL



CLIFF DOHERTY

STATION 106 SHUSWAP • FOUNDING MEMBER • BOARD OF DIRECTORS LIFE MEMBER

Cliff Doherty believed Shushwap Lake needed an organized marine search and rescue presence, and he helped make it happen.

Long before a station was formally established, Cliff was among those doing the groundwork: building relationships, making plans, and helping turn an idea into what would become RCMSAR Station 106 Shuswap.

The station was established in 2010, and in May 2012 its first rescue vessel arrived on Shuswap Lake. Cliff formally joined the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary that same year and remained deeply involved in the station and the community.

Cliff helped expand and maintain Kids Don't Float kiosks and Life Ring stations throughout the region. He also played a key role in developing, planning, and securing funding for Station 106's new rescue base.

Cliff passed away in April 2026. In recognition of his years of service and the lasting contribution he made to marine search and rescue, he was posthumously awarded a Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary Exemplary Service Medal and named a Life Member by the RCMSAR Board of Directors.

Since Station 106 began, its volunteers have responded to more than 440 missions, assisted more than 540 people, and saved 65 lives on Shuswap and Mara Lakes. Those numbers are part of the legacy Cliff leaves behind.



48 MINUTES FROM SLEEP TO RESCUE

STATION 60 COMOX • COMOX HARBOUR • PERSON IN THE WATER

A search and resuce mission is not a statistic. Each one is unique and can have a profound effect on people's lives. This is what a mission feels like from the inside — forty-eight minutes from a pager sounding in the dark to a man being rescued from a piling in the Comox Harbour.

02:12 It's 2:12 am. You're fast asleep, startled awake by your phone. It's your pager's ringtone. Adrenaline shoots you upright. A page this late can only mean one thing: someone is in trouble. Eyes still blurred from sleep, you answer. Still half asleep, you listen to the codes while getting dressed, then get into your car and drive to the station.

02:22 Walking down to the station ten minutes later, you take in the weather around you. Then you hear it: a faint voice. It's impossible to tell exactly where it's coming from, but somewhere out on the water, someone is calling for help.

02:35 You and eight other volunteers gather at the station. Three volunteers are not even on duty but heard the page and came down to help. The boats are readied, the crew gears up, roles are assigned and safety checks completed.

02:45 The cold air hits your face as the boat gets underway. Just outside the breakwater, the engines are shut down. Everyone listens. Your coxswain calls out. Nothing.

02:52 You move farther into the harbour and try again. Engines off. Listen. Call. This time, a faint voice answers. You turn toward the sound. Behind you, another crew member is coordinating by radio and phone with your other rescue vessel and emergency agencies on shore.

02:58 The boat stops again. The voice is closer now. "We can hear you!" the coxswain shouts. The person begins yelling continuously, and the crew follows the sound toward him. The boat turns toward the Dolphin, a large piling in Comox Harbour. As you get closer, you can make out the shape of someone huddled on it — and one of your crew confirms they can see him on the FLIR, the vessel's infrared camera.

03:00 **You've found him.** He's very cold, but calm, and as you can imagine, tremendously relieved. Once he's aboard the rescue vessel, his vitals are checked and you begin heading back to shore, where an ambulance is waiting.

... On the way back, he tells you what had happened. *He had been paddling late the previous afternoon when his kayak broke and flooded. He made his way toward the piling, and when his kayak sank, swam the remaining distance, and pulled himself out of the water.*

With no phone, radio or whistle, there was only one way to call for help — but in the afternoon wind, no one could hear him. He watched the sun set and the frost form as the temperature dropped. Hours passed before the wind finally died down enough for someone in Royston to hear his calls and phone 911.

03:20 After handing him over to paramedics, you return to the station. The vessels are shut down and prepared for the next call, and the crew gathers briefly to talk through the mission.

04:15 You're back in bed, exhausted, but wide awake from everything that happened. Eventually, you close your eyes, knowing that when morning comes, your life will return to its normal routine. And for the man you rescued, his will too.

STORY CONTRIBUTED BY NATALIE EVANS, STATION 60 COMOX.





VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

BEHIND EVERY CALL FOR HELP

When someone is in trouble on the water, the women and men who respond might be at work, having dinner, or even sleeping. A pager sounds, and within minutes they're making their way to the rescue base and heading out on the water.

For that to happen, volunteers need to be well trained, available, and willing to drop what they're doing when someone needs them.

Becoming a seasoned crew member doesn't happen quickly, and getting to that point is a big commitment. It takes years of training, practice, and experience on the water. And even then, there is always more to learn. Volunteers regularly give up evenings or weekends to keep their skills sharp and be ready for the next call.

Making sure those volunteers continue to be there takes more than just recruiting and training people. We need to understand what keeps them coming back, what makes volunteering difficult and what they need from RCMSAR as their lives — and our organization — change.

That's why, in 2025, we asked our volunteers to tell us about themselves, and about what it's really like to fit search and rescue into the rest of their lives.

More than 400 responded. What they told us was encouraging. Nearly 85 percent said they were either very or extremely likely to continue volunteering. Community service, teamwork, learning, and a sense of belonging were among the things they valued most.

The survey also showed the importance of having volunteers at various stages of their RCMSAR experience. Many joined within the past decade, while others brought years, and sometimes decades of experience gained through training, missions, and station life.

That experience matters. Newer volunteers learn alongside those who have handled difficult calls, trained in challenging conditions, and developed judgment that only comes with time. Eventually, newer members become the experienced ones others turn to.

Work and family commitments were among the most common pressures they identified. Weekly training nights can mean missing dinner with the family. A weekend course can mean time away from home.

400+
VOLUNTEERS RESPONDED TO THE 2025 SURVEY

85%
VERY OR EXTREMELY LIKELY TO CONTINUE VOLUNTEERING

Our volunteers are also fitting RCMSAR into very different lives. Half of those who responded balance volunteering with a full-time job. Others are retired and have schedules that allow them to respond during the day and devote more time to training, mentorship and station responsibilities.

That mix makes it possible to have trained volunteers ready to respond anytime.

They also told us where things could improve. Training consistency, communication, collaboration between stations, funding and public awareness were among the recurring themes.

Some changes are already making volunteering easier to fit into everyday life. More training can be completed at a volunteer's home station, some coursework can be completed online, and courses at headquarters have been shortened to reduce time away from home.

There was no single message from more than 400 people, nor would we expect one. But listening helps us see where changes — large and small — can make the volunteer experience better.

WHAT IS ALREADY CHANGING

More training can happen at a volunteer's home station, some coursework can be completed online, and courses at headquarters have been shortened to reduce time away from home.

On the communication side, we've begun sending volunteers a monthly e-newsletter to help them stay connected to what's happening across RCMSAR. It shares updates from the organization as well as stories and news from stations around the province.

There was no single message from more than 400 people, nor would we expect one. But listening helps us see where changes — large and small — can make the volunteer experience better.



23%
WOMEN, UP FROM 17% IN 2023

A CHANGING VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY

That growth is particularly notable in a maritime industry where women represent only a small percentage of the global workforce. It's one of the signs that the people joining RCMSAR are changing. Something that matters as we think about recruitment, training, mentorship, and the volunteers who will answer future calls.

PRACTICE BEFORE IT'S REAL

New training is giving RCMSAR volunteers more opportunities to work through complex decisions and practice the boat-handling and navigation skills they might need before someone's safety depends on them.

When a rescue vessel leaves the dock, the coxswain (the person in charge) has a lot happening at once. They could be navigating in darkness or poor visibility, keeping track of other vessels, communicating with rescue authorities, directing their team, and deciding what needs to happen next.

Those are difficult skills to learn when the stakes are real.

Strong leadership helps crews work together when conditions are difficult and decisions need to be made quickly.

This year, RCMSAR introduced the first courses in its new System for Marine Rescuer Training (SMRT), a progressive training program designed to build volunteers' skills and experience over time. At the RCMSAR Training Centre in East Sooke, volunteers put those skills into practice through simulator exercises and intensive on-the-water training.

The goal isn't simply to teach volunteers how to operate a rescue vessel. As they take on greater responsibility, they also need to learn how to assess risk, solve problems, lead a team, and make sound decisions when circumstances change quickly.

THE TRAINING PATHWAY

New Crew → Crew → Advance Crew → **Coxswain/ Restricted Coxswain**



Our Kongsberg simulator is particularly useful for putting all those skills together. It's a full-scale mock cabin surrounded by floor to ceiling screens projecting a real ocean environment. Instructors can create challenging situations that would be difficult, or simply too risky, to reproduce on the water.

A routine trip can become a night passage with poor visibility, multiple vessels nearby and a call for help that requires the volunteer in charge to decide what to do first.

For one experienced coxswain, already qualified to lead a rescue vessel, those scenarios were more realistic and demanding than anything she had previously experienced in training. For another, the biggest benefit was learning to work through competing priorities while still communicating clearly with the people around him.

Students come to the Training Centre from stations around the province, bringing different experiences and ways of doing things. Participants repeatedly find themselves learning from one another.

What happens at the Training Centre doesn't stay at the Training Centre. It goes back to local stations, where those lessons are shared and practiced by other volunteers.

> THAT'S SO SMART. I'M GOING TO TAKE THAT HOME WITH ME.
>
> ONE VOLUNTEER TO ANOTHER, COXSWAIN COURSE

No course can recreate every situation a rescue crew will encounter. The point of training is to give volunteers plenty of opportunities to face those challenges before they are real.

5 of 6

STUDENTS QUALIFIED ON A RECENT COXSWAIN COURSE

The training can be demanding, and completing a course doesn't automatically mean receiving a qualification. The sixth participant did well in many areas but needed more experience operating at night. Instead of simply moving on, the volunteer, their Station Leader and the Training Manager developed a plan for more practice and they'll have another opportunity to return and complete the course when they're ready.

That matters. The person eventually sitting in that seat will be responsible not only for a rescue vessel and the volunteers aboard it, but potentially for people waiting for help.

Boats and equipment are a big part of search and rescue. But when a call comes in, it still comes down to trained volunteers being there and knowing what to do.

KEEPING WATCH WHILE THE COMMUNITY HAS FUN

Not every day on the water is about responding to an emergency. Sometimes it involves sailing regattas, witches on paddleboards, bathtub races, fireworks, outrigger canoes — and more than a few brave souls taking a mid-winter plunge.

Throughout the year, RCMSAR stations provide on-water safety support for dozens of community events. Volunteers keep watch during sailing regattas and canoe races, stand by for polar bear swims and fireworks displays, and help make some of BC's more unusual waterfront traditions safer.

These events bring our volunteers together with the communities they serve, not because something has gone wrong, but to help make sure everyone gets to enjoy the day safely.

And occasionally, to keep an eye on a fleet of racing teacups.



THIS YEAR, VOLUNTEERS STOOD BY FOR

- Polar Bear Swims
- Canoe & Outrigger Races
- Fireworks Displays
- Racing Teacups
- Sailing Regattas
- Bathtub Races
- Witches on Paddleboards



KIDS DON'T FLOAT

A LIFEJACKET WITHIN REACH

A day on the water can change quickly — especially for a child. Wearing a properly fitting lifejacket is one of the simplest and most important ways to help keep them safe.

Today, more than 130 Kids Don't Float lifejacket loaner stations can be found along the coast of British Columbia and in the Shuswap, so families can borrow a lifejacket for their little ones whenever they need them.

Many of those loaner stations are there thanks to the support of SSA Marine Canada, whose contribution has been instrumental in helping RCMSAR expand the program into more communities, making hundreds of children's lifejackets available.

That commitment will continue. RCMSAR is thrilled to continue this relationship for another two years — and SSA Marine is equally excited to remain part of a program that helps families keep their children safe while enjoying BC's waters.

> AT SSA MARINE CANADA, WE'RE PROUD TO SUPPORT A PROGRAM THAT MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE FOR FAMILIES ACROSS BC. KIDS DON'T FLOAT IS A PRACTICAL, COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVE THAT HELPS MAKE BOATING SAFER FOR CHILDREN AND GIVES FAMILIES GREATER PEACE OF MIND AS THEY ENJOY OUR WATERS. WE'RE PLEASED TO CONTINUE OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH RCMSAR AND SUPPORT THE PROGRAM AS IT REACHES EVEN MORE COMMUNITIES.
>
> KIM STEGMAN-LOWE, PRESIDENT, SSA MARINE CANADA

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

RCMSAR's financial statements show where our funding comes from and how it is used to support training, operations, and our volunteers. But they only tell part of the story.

A significant portion of RCMSAR's headquarters funding comes from the Canadian Coast Guard. That funding supports costs directly associated with search and rescue missions—including fuel—as well as other operational expenses and some headquarters' staff positions that support our volunteer crews..

Other essential funding comes from the Province of British Columbia, corporate and foundation grants, and individual donations. Together, these funds help cover needs that extend beyond rescue missions, including training, equipment, vessel maintenance, and other costs required to maintain a reliable marine search and rescue service.

The figures presented reflect only the financial activity of RCMSAR headquarters. They do not capture all the money raised and spent locally by the independent societies that support each of our rescue stations. Those societies work year-round to raise the funds needed for vessels, equipment, maintenance, and other station needs.

That work is becoming increasingly important. Fuel, vessel maintenance, equipment and other costs continue to rise, and much of that spending happens long before a call for help comes in.

RCMSAR's complete audited financial statements are available on our website.

REVENUE

$2,905,681

Federal government	80%
Provincial government	11%
Donations	2%
Other income	7%

EXPENSES

$3,000,636

Training & operations	69%
Administration	26%
Amortization	3%
Other expenses	2%

THE NUMBERS THAT TRULY MEASURE OUR SUCCESS

They are not found in financial statements. They are the lives saved, the people given a helping hand, and the committed volunteers who dedicate themselves to marine search and rescue.

Last year, funding supported 72,972 hours of volunteer time — given freely by people who were never paid for a single one of them.

WHAT THOSE HOURS ACHIEVED

591 calls answered, 539 people brought home to safety and 59 people who are likely alive today.

Those numbers, and the stories behind them, begin on page 06.

No financial statement records that contribution because it never appears as an expense. Volunteer time is the largest single investment made in marine search and rescue in British Columbia each year.

> BEING ON THE WATER WITH AMAZING PEOPLE, CONSTANTLY LEARNING, AND KNOWING THAT WE'RE THERE TO HELP PEOPLE WHEN THEY NEED IT.
>
> VOLUNTEER STATEMENT FROM ANNUAL SURVEY



FIND YOUR PLACE ON OUR CREW

You don't need a marine background to get started. You need curiosity, commitment, and a willingness to learn.

On the water or behind the scenes, RCMSAR volunteers bring diverse skills and experiences to the crew — and each has a part to play when someone needs help.

Find your local RCMSAR rescue station and see where you fit.

HELP KEEP OUR VOLUNTEERS READY

Every rescue crew is backed by people, training and support that reach far beyond the dock.

Your donation helps provide the training, tools, programs, and behind-the-scenes support that volunteers across RCMSAR rely on to do their jobs safely and well.

Please donate to help keep our volunteers ready for the next call.

ROYAL CANADIAN MARINE SEARCH & RESCUE
Saving Lives on the Water

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